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Warburton

Sermon preached on the
General Fast Day



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A
S E R M O N

Preached on the

GENERAL FAST DAY.

By *WILLIAM WARBURTON*, M.A.

[Price Six-Pence.]

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OF

*The Nature of NATIONAL OFFENCES
truly stated:
And the peculiar Case of the Jewish People
rightly explained:*

SHEWING

*That GREAT BRITAIN, in its present Cir-
cumstances, may reasonably aspire to the
distinguished Protection of Heaven:*

A

S E R M O N

Preached on the

GENERAL FAST DAY,

Appointed to be observed

DECEMBER 18, 1745.

BY

WILLIAM WARBURTON, M. A.

Chaplain to his Royal Highness the
Prince of WALES.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. and P. KNAPTON in *Ludgate-Street*.

MDCCXLVI.

The Nation of National Differences

And its people are of the people of the

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JOEL ii. v. 20.

I will remove far off from you the Northern Army, and will drive him into a Land barren and desolate.

GOD, by the Prophet *Joel*, having denounced against his People, the Invasion of the *Assyrians*, together with the Fore-runners of that Judgment, his Army of Locusts, yet, at the same time, declares, that, on their sincere Repentance, he would drive both of them back into the horrid Regions from whence they came, with an Ignominy and Destruction as great as were their Insolence and Ravages. Now the Apostle *Paul* tells us, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our Learning; that we, thro' Patience*
and

*and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope^a : which is sufficient to assure us, that with the same Disposition of Humiliation before God, of hearty Repentance for our Sins, and sincere Resolution of Amendment, the same merciful Providence will enable us to drive far from us the haughty Power of France, with which we are now threatened ; together with their Fore-runners, this Northern Army of Locusts, allured hither by the Scent of Prey, because, as the Prophet expresses it, *The Land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them, a desolate Wilderness^b*. For as the Devil is said to carry his Hell about with him, even when in Paradise, so the Disposition of the Highlander makes every Place he treads upon as bare as his own barren Mountains.*

Thus far right Reason, the true Interpreter of Scripture, will authorize us to infer from the Nature of eternal Justice and Mercy, the essential Attributes of God, whose Will is unchangeable, and whose Arm is

^a Rom. xv. 4.

^b Joel ii. 3.

not shortened. But further to conclude of God's Dealings with States and Societies from his Dispensations to the *Jewish* People, will be the Occasion of our turning that *Scripture*, which, the Apostle here tells us, was *written for our Learning and Instruction*, to our Delusion ; and, at this Juncture, to our apparent Damage. Yet, from this Character given of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, in several Places of the Apostolic Writings, Men have not only been accustomed to regulate God's Proceeding with Particulars, but also to judge of the Fate of Kingdoms and Societies, upon their Ideas of his Administration of the *Jewish* Commonwealth. This hath been the Source of numberless Superstitions, hurtful both to Religion and Government ; some even derogatory to the Justice of God, others to the Rights of Mankind ; but all of them violating the rational Conclusions of that Learning and Instruction we are bid to seek for in Scripture, which is so abundantly able to make us wise unto Salvation. Of this kind is that Doctrine which teaches
that

that God, in the common Administration of the World, punishes Children for the Crimes of their Parents; a Dispensation peculiar to the *Jewish* People; and there indeed used with the highest Justice; but, in the present Disposition of things, it would, according to all our Ideas of Right, intrench greatly on that divine Attribute: And that other which accommodates to modern Kings the Title peculiar to the *Jewish*, of the *Lord's anointed*: which, as it is used and enforced, intrenches as deeply upon the Rights of Mankind. For a *Jewish* Monarch being really and truly the *Lord's anointed*, as he was God's own Deputy or Lieutenant in the Kingdom, and consequently to resist him, on any Pretence whatsoever, being Rebellion against God, the same Inference has been drawn, by Court Flatterers, from the same Title, for the Support of modern Tyranny; and so become one of the chief Props of that absurd and destructive Doctrine of divine indefeizable hereditary Right: Whereas it can be applied, to modern Princes, only in a figurative

rative improper Sense ; as it belonged to the *Jewish* Kings in a literal and real one : And when thus explained, and it ought to be thus explained by all who so apply it, it is of excellent Use to inform the People of the sacred Character of every legitimate Magistrate ; the resisting of whose Ordinances is, indeed, the resisting the Ordinance of God. But I have neither Time nor Leisure at present to go thro' the many various Errors and Superstitions, greatly hurtful (as we say) both to Religion and Society, which have arose, in these latter Ages, from a Misapplication of the Principles and Providences on which the *Jewish* State was formed and conducted, to the Men and the Societies of the World at large. It shall suffice, that I have just pointed out their Nature and Consequences ; and shewn the ground they stand upon, namely, those Apostolic Declarations, that all Scripture of the Old Testament, was written for our Learning and Instruction ; which, taken thus in the gross, prove extremely hurtful ; but when rightly distinguished, produce

that *Patience and Comfort*, St. Paul speaks of, as the true Foundation of Christian *Hope*. Let us understand it, therefore, that the doctrinal Points found in the Old Testament were written for our Belief, the moral Parts for the Regulation of our Conduct, and the devotional for our Exercise in Piety ; and then we shall apprehend St. Paul's true Meaning, where he says, *All Scripture is written by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness* ^a. But the greatest Part of the Old Testament is historical, and chiefly written for our Information concerning the general Oeconomy of God's Dispensation to Mankind. Hence it is, that so large an Account is given of his Administration of the *Jewish Commonwealth* ; a religious Policy added, as the Apostle says, or thrust in between the Patriarchal and Christian Dispensations, *because of Transgressions*, to preserve the Memory of the true God in an idolatrous World, till the Seed should come to whom the Promise

^a 2 Tim. iii. 16.

was made^b. In order to that End, God saw fit to erect that State into a *Theocracy*, properly so called, in which he was the supreme civil Magistrate. The Consequences of which Form of Government were these: 1. That it was administered by the Exertion of an extraordinary Providence. 2. That Religion and civil Society were thoroughly incorporated. 3. That Religion had a publick as well as private Part, the Subject of it being as well the State collectively, as Individuals particularly. And lastly, That the Sanctions both of Religion and Society were temporal Rewards and Punishments. Of all this, that is to say of the Expediency and even Necessity of such a Form of Government for the carrying on the great Ends of God's moral Government of the World, and the natural Consequences arising from it, I have elsewhere discoursed at large.

Now from the first Circumstance, the Exertion of an extraordinary Providence, it follows, that we are not to regulate our Notions of God's dealing with us, as a State

^b Gal. iii. 19.

for Nation, by his Administration of the *Jewish* People: Mankind being not now under an extraordinary, but a common Providence: I mean, it follows, we are not to expect it in the DEGREE; though indeed, from this Circumstance, nothing hinders but we might expect it in the *Kind*.

But then, from the three others, it follows, that we are not to expect it even in the K I N D. For Religion, amongst the *Jews*, was incorporated with their Society, and had a public Part: Hence Vice and Impiety, when abounding, became a public Crime; and, as such, was, from time to time, severely punished on the State. But, the *Christian* Religion has no public Part; has not the State, as such, but Individuals only, for its Subject. Hence Vice and Impiety are not now public, but private Crimes, for which Offenders shall doubtless be most severely punished, but according to the Gospel Dispensation. Again, the *Jewish* Sanctions were temporal only, which made it fit, and sometimes necessary, that the Crimes, even of private Men, should

should be punished by the Desolation of the State, as that derived condign Misery on Particulars. But the Sanctions of our Religion are future Rewards and Punishments; for the latter of which, impious and wicked Men are fitly reserved, and so not the same Expediency of punishing them, through the State.

This then, to which numberless other Considerations of Weight might be added, is sufficient to shew, that we have no real Warrant from Holy Scripture, when interpreted on the Principles of right Reason, to conclude that God's Dealings with the *Jewish* People are the Measure of administering his Providence over other States: Or that, because the PRIVATE Vices and Impieties of Men, under that Oeconomy, by the just Judgment of God, frequently brought amazing Destruction on their Nation, that it has now the self-same Tendency to provoke his Wrath against ours.

This I presume to be a fair Representation of this important Subject: And sure, it will not be judged unseasonable in a time
of

of general Danger ; when, though the ill State of our moral Condition should not be hid from us, yet methinks it ought not to be aggravated by discouraging Examples drawn from those dreadful Judgments on the *Jewish* Nation ; a Case much insisted on, and not with that Exactness which the Dignity of the sacred Writings deserve, or the Tenderness of our present Case seems to require, when every good Man will deserve the public Thanks, *Quod de Republica non desperasset.*

But it will be asked, “ Is not Vice and
 “ Impiety the certain Destruction of a
 “ State ? And are not States the Subject
 “ of God’s Mercies and Judgments ? ” My
 Answer to these Questions, which is in the
 Affirmative, will serve to support what has
 been remarked before, concerning that crude
 inconclusive Theology which makes God’s
 dealing with the *Jews* the Pattern of his
 Providence in the World at large ; and, at
 the same time, explain and clear up what
 may be obnoxious to Objection or Misin-
 terpretation.

To the first Question therefore I must observe that, where, in defining the Nature of the *Jewish* Commonwealth, I spoke of God's National Judgments on his chosen People for their Vices and Impieties, I used the exact and philosophic Language of a Divine ; meaning those Consequences of Wrong which arise from the *Will of God* ; not those which follow from the Nature of Things. Rewards and Punishments, in the first Sense, are those only which Revealed Religion acknowledges for the Sanction of its Precepts ; though moral Declaimers, and Platonic Preachers have been accustomed, by a Latitude of Expression, to call the Mischiefs arising out of moral Evil from the Nature of Things, by the Name of *God's Judgments* ; which perhaps might not deserve Notice, were they not accustomed, too, to confound these with the Judgments of God, properly so called, to the great Injury, as I deem, of Revealed Religion, for Reasons too long and intricate to be here assigned. Now, as to the natural Consequence of Vice and Impiety,

nothing

nothing is more certain than that they are the inevitable Ruin of a Commonwealth.

IMPIETY, which consists in a Contempt of the Sanctions of Religion, removing the first and strongest Prop of Society, the Dread of Divine Punishment for Falshood and Wrong. For from hence arises a Disregard to the outward Tye of Oaths, the great Security of the Magistrate; and a Disregard to the inward Tye of Conscience, the great Security of the People.

As *Impiety* undermines Society, so VICE and Immorality more openly attacks it. But both with the same fatal Success. The Epidemic Evils of every powerful Community, in its Decline, are LUXURY and AVARICE; which, by an unnatural Commixture, are incessantly begetting one another even in the same Breast; whereby the *national Wealth*, one of our great Supports against Foreign Power, becomes in Part exhausted; and, which is almost as bad, in part, unequally distributed: And the *personal Vigour* of the People, the other great Support against Foreign

reign

reign Invasions, is either enervated by misemployed Opulence, or debased by sordid Poverty. But to reckon up the long Train of Evils, issuing out of these two capital Vices, would be endless : These being they which fill private Families with unnatural Quarrels ; the Courts of Justice with Chicane, and the Councils of Government with Faction. Faction, which accumulates all the Evils of Dissention in one, and pretends to all the Virtues of good Citizens, with the Dispositions of the worst ! who, to support herself, and to draw the deluded People to their own Ruin, spares no Name however sacred, either in Religion, or Government, but occasionally employs them all to cover her private, and corrupt Purposes.

But then, if the Evils of *Impiety* and *Vice* be, in themselves, separately, so destructive to a Public ; how great must be their Malignity, when they act in concert, as they always do, when they exist together ; Prophaneness giving an Edge and Keeness to Immorality ; and Immorality a leaden Bias

to the Mind, in its acquired Aversion to Religion. However distant from the State, therefore, may be the Object of God's Judgment for private Vices, yet, we see, they bring upon it the most inevitable Ruin from the Nature of Things. A Case, that, when it comes to a certain Point, admits even less Hope than the other. For God, whose Mercies are over all his Works, frequently withholds the Evils of his Judgments from sinful Man ; but never reverses the Order of Nature to embolden him in his Impieties and Wickedness. However we have, at least, this Consolation, that, though such Destruction be sure, we yet have it in our own Power to avoid it, by a speedy Course of Sobriety, Justice, and Piety ; by which, as Kingdoms become great, so by that only, can they thus continue. For, is it possible to conceive, in the natural Body, that an Athletic Habit, acquired by Abstinence and Exercise, should be preserved by Intemperance and Sloth ? If it be, then may a Body politic, made great by the modest Parsimony,

mony, the Virtue and Religion of its Members, become still greater by their Luxury, Injustice, and Impiety.

We come now to our second Question, “ Whether States, as well as private Men, “ may not be the Subject of divine Displea- “ sure, so as to bring down his severest “ Judgments upon them?” To which we reply, that nothing is more certain. They, as well as private Men, having all those essential Qualities, which constitute a moral Agent; a Discernment of Good and Evil, a Will to chuse, and a Power to put their Choice in Execution. In one Word, artificial Men. Hence the Rules of civil Justice, in the Intercourse between People and People, are exactly the same, as those in a State of Nature, between Man and Man. And accordingly we find, (for here Scripture comes in again for our Learning) that God dealt with the *Jewish* People under this Idea. And though his *particular Contract* with them will not suffer us to collect, from that Administration, a similar Mode of Providence

over others ; yet his entering at all into Contract, shews that States are considered, and will be dealt with by him as moral Agents.

We must needs therefore conclude, both from Revelation and Reason, that the Hand of Heaven distributes Good and Evil to Societies, according to their moral Merit or Demerit. Not upon that Fancy, that as States are only artificial Beings with a present Existence, and incapable of a *future*, that therefore God is *obliged* in Justice to punish and reward them *here*. This is a mere School Invention, and confuted by the general History of the moral World ; in which we find many signal Examples of the divine Vengeance amongst States and Communities ; yet, generally, at such a Distance from the Crime, that a new Succession feels the Pain of their Predecessors Transgression. Now, the Doctrine here confuted, goes upon the Idea of *identical* Punishment ; but, in the Case given, the *Sameness* is not real or natural, but nominal
merely,

merely, and artificial. Again, according to this Doctrine, the Administration should be constant and exact, failing in no Instance, nor defective in any Degree ; whereas we have many Examples in States, as well as private Men, where Iniquity hath quite escaped the Divine Vengeance. From hence we conclude, that, not for the fantastic Reason here confuted, but for one far more solid and substantial, Societies are punished or rewarded according to their Behaviour ; a Reason worthy the Dominion of the Great Lord of the Universe, that is to say, for Example, and to keep alive the Sense of a Divine Providence, in a careless impious World.

It remains, therefore, only to consider what those Actions of Society be, which are the peculiar Object of divine Favour or Displeasure : And those (in a Society, already established, like our own, on a System of fundamental Laws securing Reverence to the Deity, and discouraging all Vice and Immorality) can evidently be
no

no other than what concern it's Conduct in transacting with Neighbour States ; or, in other Words, its Observance or Neglect of good Faith, Justice, and Equity. By this Test, then, let *Great Britain* be tried. Let it be fairly examined whether, in its collective Capacity, it deserves, or has just Reason to fear that impending Vengeance, from the Hand of Heaven, with which, in a time of so apparent Danger, good Men may be but too apt to terrify themselves.

Now, to pass over our National Transactions since the Revolution to these Times, (which have been so unfashionably tenacious of the public Faith, and objective to the good of *Europe*, that we have gained abroad the Character of the worst Politicians in it) and come to our present Doings ; it is certain, a common Observation will be sufficient to inform us, that, though the corrupt Interests of private Men, of trading Bodies, and of State Parties amongst us, might have all
concur-

concurred to push us forward into a War, the Effects of which we at present labour under; yet that this War was begun first against SPAIN, for the Reparation of real Injuries, owned and acknowledged, with Promise too of Satisfaction, in public Convocation, by our very Enemies themselves; but encouraged by our unhappy Divisions, they violated this Convention, on which, Hostilities commenced. In this Quarrel we were *Principals*. An *Auxiliary* War followed, in support of the House of AUSTRIA, unjustly attacked, and against all the Faith of Treaties ravaged, which very Faith engaged us to carry our Arms to her Assistance. Both these together soon produced a *Defensive* War against FRANCE; whose restless Ambition, (essential to her Constitution) to give Law to *Europe*, seizing every favourable Conjuncture of Advancing that darling Idol of her Politics, encouraged *Spain* to persist in denying us Justice, and supported the Enemies of the House of *Austria* in their

their cruel Inroads upon her Dominions. And all this, with the most apparent Purpose of breaking that established and equitable Ballance of Power, so necessary for the Peace and Felicity of *Europe* : which, when she found us resolved to maintain, she publicly denounced War against us in all its Forms.

This is a true State of the public Quarrel, and of our Share in it, and Conduct with Regard to our Neighbours. And what is there in all this, that shall make us afraid to appeal for Justice to the Throne of Right?

If Reparation, by the Sword, for National Injuries, after all the Ways of Peace had been tried in vain ; if the Performance of public Faith, when solemnly called upon, in behalf of a confederate Power, most unjustly and perfidiously oppressed ; if Self-Defence against those who openly set themselves to traverse and defeat the honest Purposes which God and Nature called upon us to discharge ; if lastly, the
Support

Support of the established Ballance of Power, that is, the Liberties of *Europe*, against the most detestable Perfidy, the most unjust Usurpations, and the most lawless and destructive Ambition that any Age hath disclosed ; if, I say, all, or any thing of this, may intitle us to the Protection of Heaven, we seem to have the most rational and well grounded Expectations of its Declaration in our Favour.

This public Act of Humiliation, before God, is enjoined, therefore, with a Modesty, and holy Confidence, not commonly observed by Authority on these Occasions ; where the tremendous Majesty of Heaven is, with an Impiety that makes sober Men astonished, too frequently mocked and insulted by invoking its Blessings on the Arms of Fraud, Rapine, and Injustice. But, blessed be God ! *Great Britain* has a Cause which may not only, with Modesty, supplicate the Protection, but, with Confidence, appeal to the Justice of Heaven : being founded on the

solid Basis of Self-Defence, Public Faith, and the Liberties of Mankind, in a just and necessary War.

There is only one impediment we have to fear, in the happy Issue of our Appeal; and that is, the private Vices and Impieties of the Nation; And to remove this, was the Purpose of this solemn Act of Devotion; in which we are called upon by our Gracious Sovereign (ever intent upon our Welfare) to humble ourselves before the avenging Hand of God, and deprecate his Judgments, by a free Confession of our Sins, and a determined Purpose of Amendment.

I have shewn you how certain and inevitable a Destruction Vice and Impiety at length bring upon a People. If this be not sufficient to induce you to a speedy Reformation, think upon the Consequence of persisting in them at this Juncture; when, by suspending the Protection of Heaven, which, as a Community, I have shewn, we might have just Cause to expect,

pect, we hasten, by God's Displeasure, that Ruin which is more slowly advancing from the Nature of Things. So that in this, besides the Reason of infinite Importance, our *future* Welfare, which we have in common with all Men, our *present* is vitally and immediately concerned. The Enjoyment of all that is dear and valuable to Men, depending on the Preservation of our happy Constitution, now more shaken by our private Vices, than by the Arms of its degenerate and rebellious Subjects.

Let us then, in good Earnest, resolve upon a thorough Reformation ; a return to that Simplicity of Manners, that Modesty in Dress and Diet, that Temperance in Pleasures, that Justice in Business, which made *Britain* so distinguished in the Annals of our Forefathers. Let us speedily return to that sober Piety, and serious Sense of Religion, by which they were encouraged to form, and enabled to support, the Principles on which this happy Constitution is erected. But above all, as the first Step into the old

Paths

Paths of Honour, let us emancipate ourselves from that detestable Spirit of Libertinism, impudently assuming the Name of FREE-THINKING; the Bane of civil Life, the Opprobrium of common Sense, and a Dishonour even to our common Humanity. Let us do this, and we shall soon have Earth and Heaven once more in Conjunction, to make us happy and victorious over all the Enemies of our Peace.

F I N I S.

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